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## User Views

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### Inquiring Minds

**Answers to the most common Informix user questions.**

By Stuart Litel

In my role as president of the International Informix Users Group (IIUG), I answer a lot of questions from Informix users. Three questions in particular arise again and again: Are there any administrative tools to help me with Informix? Where can I get help with Informix performance? What's the story with Informix 4GL? Many of the answers to these questions are coming from IIUG sponsors. I'll highlight some of the most interesting solutions.

One of the best kept Informix secrets is that IBM supplies powerful administration tools with every Informix server. Server Studio JE with Sentinel from AGS is a multiplatform suite of integrated system management tools. Server Studio JE tools simplify common database tasks such as SQL development and debugging, schema management, configuration auditing and change management, performance tuning, data storage management and reorganization, security administration, and more. An integrated graphical console unites all development, administration, and maintenance activities for an Informix infrastructure at a centralized point of control. Sentinel automates proactive 24x7 operational monitoring of Informix servers, provides an extensive array of sophisticated diagnostics tools to optimize critical performance parameters, executes regular database maintenance tasks, enables setting of highly flexible multilevel alerts to flag availability and performance degradation problems, and manages autonomic responses to server events in real time.

If you're having Informix performance problems, a new tool — released by a company started by former Informix employees — could help. The new DBSonar management and performance tuning tool combines a drill-down analysis approach for tuning with in-depth real-time monitoring of the Informix Dynamic Server (IDS) engine. It provides key performance indicators for database operations, highlights current database problems, traces performance problems to their root causes, and offers suggested actions.

Customizable alerts are delivered via on-screen messages, SMS, or email. A comprehensive status report of IDS, OS, network, and hardware, plus suggestions for onconfig parameter improvements, supports resource planning. A unique normalization algorithm for SQL statement analysis helps tune application performance without requiring access to the application code. DBSonar offers a customizable trend chart module, a GUI for alert configuration, and easy monitoring of an infinite number of database servers from a single screen through a customizable directory-like structure. Unlike other performance tools, DBSonar doesn't retrieve data from the sysmasters interface; instead it captures all data directly from the shared memory.

Many mission-critical 4GL applications still run today and are too critical to risk rewriting in Java or .Net. Think of the time and cost it would take to do so. Enterprises have invested tens — in some cases hundreds — of man-years in sophisticated business logic that forms the backbone of their IT strategy. Developers are turning to Genero, a tool from Four J's Development Tools that's nearly 100 percent compatible with Informix 4GL. Genero lets companies Web-enable 4GL applications or render them under Windows, Linux, or Mac OS X graphical clients. Need your 4GL applications to talk to the outside world via Web services? Need access to DB2, MS-SQL, or Oracle as well as Informix? Genero can help.

These IIUG sponsors are dedicated to the Informix community. Check them out and make your life easier.

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## Resources

[IBM Informix Tools](#)

[DBSonar](#)

[Genero](#)

[Server Studio JE](#)

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## Web Services With A Smile

**DBAs are the key to successful service initiatives.**

By David Beulke

Web services provide a way to simplify processing and shield developers from the complexity of underlying systems. The simpler things become for developers, however, the more complicated they become for those in IT support and management.

Today, even the database can be a Web service. Instead of doing a SQL statement within a Java or .Net program, application developers simply call a method or module and the data is magically returned to them. This approach hides the connection, SQL, and table specifics that developers just complain about anyway. Keeping developers concentrating on the business issues rather than mucking with infrastructure parameters can be a good thing. But out-of-sight, out-of-mind parameters in multiple platforms or software layers do need to be analyzed and tuned. (That's been a boon to DBA consulting businesses.)

Web architecture, database system settings, and table and index design become more important when programmers have less knowledge of what's happening behind the scenes. As a result, DBAs must get involved from the first mention of Web services so that they understand the requests, the planned environment, and performance expectations. Web services can be a great way to centralize and standardize processes, but they might not be appropriate in every case. Involving the DB2 DBA and the support staff at the beginning to verify the proposed Web service architecture and design can help guarantee performance later.

Another reason to get involved early is to explain the required error checking, database security, and recoverability aspects. A client of mine recently tested a new Web service while the database was offline and being reloaded with fresh test data. The Web service testing continued without returning an error message — even though the service was unable to access the database. I worked with the client's system support staff, DBAs, and programmers to develop Web services standards that embrace performance, security, and transaction integrity.

New Web service opportunities are coming. Learn the proper architecture and infrastructure at the [International DB2 User Group](#) (IDUG) North America conference this May.

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[David Beulke](#) is a past president of IDUG and a DB2 consultant, author, and lecturer.

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